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ABSTRACT

Addressing the question of teacher attrition, this study sought the opinions of 200 female educators using a questionnaire that focused on selected educational issues: (1) choosing education as a career in retrospect; (2) the perception of teachers as an "endangered species"; (3) advantages for females and males in teaching; (4) salaries; (5) merit pay; (6) policy-making rights; (7) the need for preteacher mathematics education; and (8) encouraging sons and daughters to become teachers. One-half of the subjects were retired and the remaining half were actively involved in education. The distinction between practicing and retired teachers' attitudes was tested with a multivariate discriminant model. Seventy percent of the teachers were correctly classified by six issues: encouraging sons and daughters to become teachers, salaries, the view that teachers are becoming an "endangered species," the belief that teaching has advantages for males, and the need for preteacher preparation in mathematics. Percentages for each issue were generally higher for full-time practicing teachers than for retired teachers. Results of the questionnaire are displayed, and a copy of the questionnaire is appended. (JD)

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THE CLASSROOM TEACHER: AN ENDANGERED SPECIES?

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THE CLASSROOM TEACHER: AN ENDANGERED SPECIES?

Yvetta George Barbara Schaer

Is the classroom teacher slated for extinction? At least one group of educators seems to think so. The present study tapped the attitudes of educators regarding some of the issues in the field of education, with interesting results.

The controversy over teacher competency testing in many states has developed some hard feelings in the teaching profession. The issues at stake are not just testing for competency at one end of the scale, but also salary, discipline, class size, merit pay and decision-making policies at the other end of the political scale. Many educators report that the resolution of these issues will greatly determine the progress and prospects of future classroom teachers (Haubrich, 1960; Roberson, et al, 1983).

Recent studies dealing with factors influencing those who remain in education suggests that academic ability and social class are important negative influences on the decisions of many and thus those who actually complete degrees in education are less intellectually able than those who enter other fields (Vance & Schlechty, 1982).

Attitude research is not consistent in findings of reasons for high attrition rates in first year teachers and experienced teachers. However, several studies have found negative statistics in attrition rates (Chapman & Hutcheson, 1982; Chapman, 1984). Results from these studies showed that individuals leaving teaching assigned greater import-

ance to job autonomy, salary increases, and the chance to contribute to important decisions, while those remaining in teaching assigned more importance to recognition by other people, particularly supervisors, family and friends. It was found that the most meaningful distinction between those who prepared for teaching but never taught and those who entered teaching only to leave it within a few years was found to involve personal and family characteristics, and the person's initial commitment to teaching. Other influences which often affect the decision to continue teaching has to do with the quality of the person's first teaching experience and a supportive administrator (Chapman, 1984).

Historical approaches to attitude attrition problems indicate the gradual shift in motivation to teach as a factor of the changing times. In the fifties, sixties, and early seventies, former teachers were perceived as the most influential factor in the career choices of education students (Roberson, et al, 1983 ; Wood, 1978). However, another researcher (Haubrich, 1960)
in 1960 found job security, rather than dedication, to be the most frequent reason given by education students as to why they selected teaching as a career, which led to the "mattress philosophy" of prospective teachers. That is, teaching as something to "fall back on".

One problem with current attitude studies is that isolated statistics on issues are reported instead of combining the many issues over the past decade into multi-

dimensional investigations. The purpose of the present study was to combine fragmented issues of concern into a single questionnaire to tap practicing and retired educators' opinions on significant issues in a multivariate analysis.

Subjects:

Approximately 200 female educators from different educational levels and disciplines filled out the Educators' Attitude Scale at a Southeast regional professional conference. One half of the subjects were retired and the remaining subjects were actively involved in education.

Instrumentation/Results:

The distinction between practicing and retired teachers on opinions of ten educational status issues listed in the literature as important (choosing education as a career in retrospect; the perception of the teacher as an "endangered species"; advantages for females and males in teaching; salaries; merit pay; policy making rights; the need for preteacher math education; and encouraging sons and daughters to become teachers) was tested with a multivariate discriminant model (See Table One).

One significant function accounted for 23% of the variance between practicing and retired teachers on opinions on the status of employment. Seventy percent of the teachers were correctly classified by 6 issues: encouraging sons and daughters to become teachers, salaries, the view that teachers are becoming "an endangered species", belief that

teaching has advantages for males and the need for preteacher preparation in math.

Percentages for each issue are generally higher for full time practicing teachers than for retired teachers. Rankings of five issues: parental support, classroom size, discipline, salary and sex/race bias showed the first four issues to be areas of significant concern, however, the issue of sex/race bias was ranked as being unimportant.

Discussion:

Results of this study bring to mind some interesting questions for further study. Why do retired or nonactive teachers view the current issues in a more critical fashion than practicing teachers? If the state of education has gotten progressively worse, why do the practicing teachers not see the deficiencies when retired teachers do? Is retrospective sight more accurate, or is the decline in excellence a gradual process visible only from a distance? Future research in these attitudes could center on the nature of historical education and its virtues as well as longitudinal views of the state of issues.

References:

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Vance,V.S., Schlechty,P.C. (1982). The distribution of academic ability in the teaching force:Policy implications. Phi Delta Kappan,64,22.

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TABLE 1

CANONICAL DISCRIMINANT FUNCTIONS

EIGENVALUE	PERCENT OF VARIANCE	CANONICAL CORRELATION	AFTER FUNCTION	WILKS' LAMBDA	CHI-SQUARED	D.F.	SIGNIFICANCE
0.23330	100.00	0.4349323	0	0.8108339	52.842	6	0.0000

DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION COEFFICIENTS

STANDARDIZED

	FUNC 1
I2	0.42271
I4	-0.31081
I5	0.49787
I6	0.38070
I7	0.45576
I8	0.36137

STRUCTURE MATRIX:

	FUNC 1
I7	0.59033
I5	0.54522
I6	0.53352
I8	0.36903
I1	0.33971
I10	0.30970
I2	0.23407
I3	0.14078
I9	0.12420
I4	-0.07752

TABLE 2

16 FEB 86 ATTITUDE TOWARD SEXBIAS BY TEACHERS
12:29:52 AUBURN UNIVERSITY COMPUTING IBM 3033

SUMMARY TABLE

STEP	ACTION ENTERED	REMOVED	VARS IN	WILKS' LAMBDA	SIG.	LABEL
1	I7		1	.92481	.0000	ENCOURAGE SON TEA
2	I5		2	.88702	.0000	SALARIES ARE ADEQ
3	I2		3	.85621	.0000	TEAC IS ENDANGERED
4	I4		4	.83960	.0000	ED HAS ADV FOR MAL
5	I8		5	.82378	.0000	TEA PREP NEEDS MATH
6	I6		6	.81083	.0000	ENCOURAGE DAUG TEA

CLASSIFICATION FUNCTION COEFFICIENTS
(FISHER'S LINEAR DISCRIMINANT FUNCTIONS)

WORK =	1 FULL TIME	3 RETIRED
I2	2.247609	1.951975
I4	.9222230	1.264581
I5	4.372014	3.878349
I6	1.881469	1.568521
I7	1.113436	.7375288
I8	2.094828	1.783785
(CONSTANT)	-22.06012	-17.02436

TABLE 3

CANONICAL DISCRIMINANT FUNCTIONS EVALUATED AT GROUP MEANS (GROUP CENTROIDS)

GROUP	FUNC 1
1	0.46456
3	-0.49828

CLASSIFICATION RESULTS -

ACTUAL GROUP	NO. OF CASES	PREDICTED GROUP MEMBERSHIP 1	3
GROUP 1 FULL TIME	133	103 77.4%	30 22.6%
GROUP 3 RETIRED	124	47 37.9%	77 62.1%
UNGROUPED CASES	26	11 42.3%	15 57.7%

PERCENT OF "GROUPED" CASES CORRECTLY CLASSIFIED: 70.04%

EDUCATORS' ATTITUDE SCALE

Years of experience in education:_____

Age:____ Sex:_____

Working status:level/subject area
full-time___; part-time___; retired___
teacher___; administrator___; supervisor/specialist___
elementary___; middle-school___; high school___; college___
voc.tech___; other___; grade___; subject_____

Attitude scale:
Strongly Agree = SA; Agree = A;Neutral = N;Disagree = D;
Strongly Disagree = SD
circle one answer for each question:

1. If starting a new career, I would choose education:	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. The classroom teacher is an "endangered species":	SA	A	N	D	SD
3. Education has advancement opportunities for females:	SA	A	N	D	SD
4. Education has advancement opportunities for males:	SA	A	N	D	SD
5. Salaries are adequate for educators:	SA	A	N	D	SD
6. I would encourage my daughter to become an educator:	SA	A	N	D	SD
7. I would encourage my son to become an educator:	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. Teacher preparation should require advanced mathematics:	SA	A	N	D	SD
9. Merit pay is a worthwhile reward system for educators:	SA	A	N	D	SD
10. Educators have adequate policy decision-making power:	SA	A	N	D	SD

Rank the following areas of concern 1 through 5, with 1 being the area of greatest concern and 5 being the area of least concern in education: (do NOT omit a number)

parent support ___
discipline ___
class size ___
salary ___
sex/race bias ___

EDUCATORS' ATTITUDE SCALE

Years of experience in education:_____

Age:____ Sex:_____

Working status:level/subject area
full-time___; part-time___; retired___
teacher___; administrator___; supervisor/specialist___
elementary___; middle-school___; high school___; college___
voc.tech___; other___; grade___; subject_____
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